

# **MYST, MIGHT, MAYHEM**

## **Myst, Might, Mayhem #Chapter 21 - Read Myst, Might, Mayhem Chapter 21**

Chapter 21

The connected red thread.

It signified that They were connected.

A servant ghost.

The Green ghost being, who had become a monster employed by a master, was screaming and throwing a fit, unable to contain how unfair and absurd this situation was.

It even threatened Mok Gyeong-un, unable to overcome its anger.

However,

-Ack!

-Ugh! shit!

The Green ghost being had been strangling Mok Gyeong-un's neck, but suddenly let go in a panic.

Wondering why it did that, he noticed red handprints appearing on the Green ghost being's pale neck.

'Could it be?'

Upon seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un realized one thing.

Although he didn't know the exact reason, it seemed that a servant ghost shared the harm inflicted on its master.

'So that's why.'

It made sense why the Demonic Monk had black spots appearing all over its body.

It was because the damage the Green ghost being had taken from the blood droplet attacks had also affected the Demonic Monk.

'I see.'

He now understood why servant ghost followed their masters.

Since their were connected and they shared harm, they had no choice but to eliminate anything that threatened their master.

Seeing this, he could understand why the Green ghost being was reacting like that.

How infuriated must that arrogant being be to have become a servant ghost no different from a slave?

Even if it was a ghost, it would be enraged.

But that was the end of it.

Mok Gyeong-un didn't care whether the Green ghost being felt wronged or infuriated.

Rather, he was satisfied that he had achieved his goal.

'Green ghost level.'

In terms of level, it was the fifth out of seven levels, a high-level wandering spirit close to Imaemangnyang.

Unlike the Demonic Monk, which was at the Yellow ghost level, a ghost Spirit level wandering spirit that had existed with its resentment for over a hundred years could influence things other than living beings.

Mok Gyeong-un wanted to confirm this.

'But before that...'

Mok Gyeong-un spoke to the Green ghost being, who was still exploding with anger.

"Now that you've become a servant ghost, what should I call you?"

-...

"Continuing like this is just a waste of time, isn't it?"

-...

'Hmm.'

Mok Gyeong-un sighed.

Seeing her panting and refusing to even make eye contact, he shook his head from side to side.

"Then I guess it doesn't matter what I call you."

-...

"Is it okay to call you an idiot or something?"

-How dare you!

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the Green ghost being, who had been avoiding eye contact, swiftly turned its head.

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said,

"I guess you don't like that either."

At that, one of the Green ghost being's eyebrows rose frighteningly.

-You damn mortal, are you toying with me?

"If you don't want me to toy with you, tell me a proper way to address you."

-There's no way of address I would tell a lowly mortal like you.

After saying that, the Green ghost being swiftly turned its head away again.

Seeing this, Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue inwardly.

Fortunately, it wouldn't be a threat to him, but he thought it might be quite difficult to control.

"I have no choice. Since you don't want to tell me, I'll call you whatever I want."

-...

"I can't think of anything specific, so I'll call you Cheong-ryeong."

Mok Gyeong-un decided to directly use the level indicating the wandering ghost's rank, Cheong-ryeong, as its form of address.

At this, the Green ghost being slightly frowned.

It seemed to bother it somehow.

However, it didn't seem to want to reveal its true name or title due to its pride.

'I'll have to coax it slowly.'

If he couldn't make use of the Green ghost level he had obtained, it would be meaningless.

Without revealing this, Mok Gyeong-un approached somewhere.

It was the book that had its outer cover, which was human skin, torn off and fallen on the floor of the cavity.

Picking up the book, Mok Gyeong-un asked,

"You must know well what's written inside, Cheong-ryeong."

-Who are you calling Cheong-ryeong... Phew.

She was about to get angry but waved her hand as if she didn't want to engage in conversation.

Then, she reached out, picked up the pipe that had fallen on the floor, and smoked it.

She seemed to be quite a heavy smoker.

Mok Gyeong-un smacked his lips and flipped through the book.

'Huh?'

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes flickered with interest.

The writing inside the book seemed to be written in blood.

'Interesting.'

The outer cover was human skin, and the writing was in blood.

Most people would be too repulsed by this book to even think of flipping through it.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un didn't care about such things at all.

However, that wasn't the problem.

'What is this?'

The characters inside the book were jumbled and mixed without any order.

They were listed so haphazardly that it was difficult to even interpret them.

Mok Gyeong-un frowned as he looked at those characters.

'Why are they listed so incoherently?'

The characters were also very abstract words rather than ordinary ones.

He had recently seen writing like this.

It was none other than the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique.

Although it described breathing and qi circulation methods, the parts related to the mind secrets were composed of quite abstract words, like reading a poem.

'It's similar. But more complicated.'

A total of thirty characters were listed in a random order.

It seemed to be a combination of them, but no matter how he connected them, meaningless sentences were formed.

—Snicker!

At that moment, he heard a snickering sound.

Looking in that direction, he saw Cheong-ryeong smoking the pipe and shaking her head.

Judging from her reaction, it seemed like even if he died and came back to life, he would never know what this was.

Mok Gyeong-un ignored this and stared intently at the characters.

"Hmm..."

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been staring for a while.

Soon, Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth.

"Without cutting off deluded thoughts... Using form as the heart's sheep..."

-!?

As the two sentences came out, Cheong-ryeong, who had been sneering, stiffened her expression.

Through this reaction, Mok Gyeong-un could infer that the two sentences he had combined were correct.

However, he deliberately didn't show it, as he wouldn't be able to confirm it through Cheong-ryeong's expression, and he inferred the following sentences.

"No awakening before ... No form's shape turning..."

As he said this, Cheong-ryeong's expression stiffened and she even frowned.

It seemed that the following sentences were also correct.

He was connecting them based on what felt most fitting, and they were falling into place.

With the remaining six words,

As if excellently measuring the sea's distance... Also understanding the endless cave."

-Ugh!

Right as he finished saying that,

The moment he completed the sentence, he felt a sensation of his navel being pinched, and the book he was holding became strangely crumpled.

'What ?'

Mok Gyeong-un couldn't understand.

Looking at the crumpled shape of the book, the paper was scrunched up in the direction of the hand holding it.

It was as if it was trying to stick to his palm.

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong's voice reached his ears.

-How did you achieve the Ritual of Binding[1]?

"Pardon?"

As Mok Gyeong-un asked and looked at her, Cheong-ryeong had a surprised expression but swiftly turned her head away.

Her determination not to engage in conversation seemed firm.

Looking at her, Mok Gyeong-un asked in puzzlement,

“What is the Ritual of Binding? Is it related to the book becoming like this?”

-...

“When the book crumpled, I felt a slight tightness below my navel. Is that also related?”

-Ha...

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Cheong-ryeong was dumbfounded.

Cheong-ryeong had long known that Mok Gyeong-un had not learned any martial arts at all.

Therefore, she was certain that he would never understand this.

No, it had to be that way because it was difficult to even accept this without reaching a certain level or having an epiphany.

However, surprisingly, Mok Gyeong-un had combined these thirty characters and created the first verse.

-...

Cheong-ryeong glanced at Mok Gyeong-un.

Although she didn’t want to engage in conversation because he had made her his servant ghost, her curiosity grew.

She wondered if he had truly understood it properly.

Soon, Cheong-ryeong, who had been contemplating, opened her mouth.

-Hey, mortal.

“Jeong... No, it’s Mok Gyeong-un.”

-What?

“Call me Mok Gyeong-un.”

At those words, Cheong-ryeong scoffed and said,

-Mortal.

It seemed that even if he told her his name, she had no intention of calling him that.

Since he didn't particularly care about that, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders.

It didn't matter what she called him as long as they could communicate.

Cheong-ryeong puffed on the pipe and exhaled smoke, saying,

-Mortal. Do you remember the sensation you felt earlier?

"Sensation?"

-Yes.

"Your words are vague."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Cheong-ryeong stared at him and shook her head.

-To think a lowly mortal could easily master the Ritual of Binding doesn't make sense...

-Ugh!

Before she could even finish her sentence,

The book Mok Gyeong-un was holding crumpled even more and stuck to his palm.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes flickered with interest as he saw this.

'Ah?'

As Cheong-ryeong had said, he recalled that sensation and this time, he focused on reciting the verse in his mind.

Then, once again, the paper crumpled and stuck to his palm.

It was truly a strange occurrence.

However, doing this made his navel area slightly tighten again.

Not only that, but he also felt a sensation of the blood vessels in his arm tightening, starting from his palm.

Mok Gyeong-un looked at Cheong-ryeong and asked,

“What is this?”

Cheong-ryeong looked at Mok Gyeong-un and muttered in astonishment, clicking her tongue.

-... I've never seen this even when I was alive.

“Pardon?”

-... Never mind.

“What do you mean by never mind?”

-Ignore it. Mortal.

“Since we've already become a community of fate, how about emptying your mind a little?”

-Empty my mind? Ha! For me to empty my mind after becoming the servant ghost of a lowly mortal like you...

“Ugh!”

Before she could finish her sentence, Mok Gyeong-un clenched his fist.

The blood vessels on the back of his hand and wrist were already bulging as if they would burst.

-Tremble tremble!

-Tsk!

The back of Cheong-ryeong's hand trembled.

It was because Mok Gyeong-un's pain was connected .

At this, Cheong-ryeong shouted,

-Hey! Mortal. Stop your breathing and empty your mind.

“Huff huff!”

-I told you to stop breathing!

At her shout, Mok Gyeong-un forcibly held his breath.

And he tried to erase the verses he had been unconsciously reciting in his mind by thinking of other things.

Cheong-ryeong's eyes narrowed at Mok Gyeong-un's appearance.

It was tremendous concentration.

What had just happened was a phenomenon that occurred due to the inability to control the Ritual of Binding.

Normally, once one was caught up in the verse, it would be difficult to escape that state without someone's help.

However, Mok Gyeong-un was escaping it with his own strength after just a single piece of advice.

It would be a lie to say she wasn't surprised.

"Haa."

Soon, a stable breathing sound was heard from Mok Gyeong-un's mouth.

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

Mok Gyeong-un asked her,

"Why did that happen just now?"

-... It's because you couldn't properly control the Ritual of Binding.

This time, contrary to expectations, Cheong-ryeong answered nicely.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said,

"Are you going to teach me properly now?"

-Hmph! It's only to prevent you from doing something useless again and causing harm to me.

At Cheong-ryeong's blunt tone, Mok Gyeong-un narrowed his eyes and stared at her.

Then, he soon shrugged his shoulders.

It didn't matter what the reason was.

As long as he could satisfy his curiosity.

“What is the Ritual of Binding?”

-It's exactly as it sounds. It's to attract and make something stick.

“If you make something stick, do you mean like earlier?”

-Yes.

“But why did my stomach hurt, and not only that, my blood vessels also became swollen?”

-Because you're just attracting something where there's nothing.

“What does that mean?”

Puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un looked at Cheong-ryeong, who pointed somewhere with her pipe.

It was Jo Il-sang, who was hanging dead.

Hanging him upside down and slitting his throat had drained all the blood from his body, making him extremely pale.

“Try it there.”

“On this?”

Mok Gyeong-un approached the dead Jo Il-sang and poked him.

Cheong-ryeong nodded at this.

“...”

He didn't know why she told him to try the Ritual of Binding on the dead Jo Il-sang, but Mok Gyeong-un put his palm on him without question.

Then, Cheong-ryeong urged,

-No, not there.

“Pardon?”

-Do it on his danjeon area. Although his energy has dispersed since he's dead, do it there.

“By danjeon, do you mean the area below the navel in the abdomen?”

-Do I have to explain everything one by one?

“... Well, I don't know much.”

At those words, Cheong-ryeong snorted and puffed on her pipe, exhaling smoke.

Mok Gyeong-un lightly inhaled and placed his palm on Jo Il-sang's danjeon.

Then, he recited the verse of the Ritual of Binding in his mind.

“Without cutting off deluded thoughts... Using form as the heart's sheep... No awakening ... No form's shape turning...As if excellently measuring the sea's distance... Also understanding the endless cave.”’

Along with that, he recalled the sensation, and,

-Slap!

Then, the skin on Jo Il-sang's danjeon area stuck to Mok Gyeong-un's palm.

Although the texture was different from when the book crumpled, there wasn't much else.

He was about to think that way.

At that moment, something penetrated his palm.

It was a warm energy.

‘What is this?’

He could clearly feel the energy entering through his palm and flowing through his blood vessels.

Soon, the warm sensation flowing through his blood vessels made even his swollen abdomen feel warm.

He was feeling elated by the warm energy.

Chapter 22

We corrected the numbering of chapters from 250 to 270 (there are some errors in it, but the consistency of the chapters is correct, don't worry)

-Can you feel it? That's the subtle principle of the Ritual of Binding. It can pull and attach anything. Even qi is no exception.

"Qi?"

Is that the internal energy that martial artists talk about?

Cheong-ryeong looked at Mok Gyeong-un with an incredulous expression.

-Don't tell me you didn't even know about this?

In response to her reaction, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders.

Until just a short while ago, he had been living without even knowing what martial arts were.

'So this is what it was.'

However, feeling this was definitely a first for him.

But why did it feel like it wasn't the first time he had felt it?

There was a time when his grandfather had gently rubbed his back and stomach when he was first poisoned by the noxious herbs.

'...It was warm like this back then too.'

It wasn't just that his palms were warm, but his insides felt warm just like now.

Could it be that his grandfather had also cultivated this internal energy?

A small doubt arose.

Just then, the warm energy, no, the qi that had been entering through his palms suddenly felt cold.

Unlike before, it felt chilly and foreign.

"It suddenly turned cold."

-It turned cold?

Cheong-ryeong furrowed her brows at Mok Gyeong-un's words.

-Why is that?

“It’s cold. Maybe the qi was depleted?”

-Hmm. That shouldn’t be the case.

“It’s cold. Just like...”

It was close to the unique death energy or yin energy emitted by the dead.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had killed numerous people to find his grandfather’s killer, was closely acquainted with death.

That’s why this unique feeling felt similar to him.

However, it soon ceased.

-Bulge!

The veins on the back of Mok Gyeong-un’s hand bulged.

Seeing this, Cheong-ryeong nodded her head as if she understood.

The energy must have been depleted. Try stopping your breath and cease using the Ritual of Binding.

“Alright.”

Mok Gyeong-un, who remembered the sensation he had stopped earlier, held his breath and concentrated.

Then, the suction into his palms stopped, and the bulging veins soon subsided.

“Phew.”

Having calmed the Ritual of Binding like that, Mok Gyeong-un could feel something else.

It was that the qi that had entered his body was rapidly dispersing.

“The warm energy is scattering?”

-The basic nature of qi is to disperse. It’s like the air you breathe in.

“Oh, is that so?”

-Why do you think martial artists are so obsessed with breathing methods and qigong? It’s to gather the scattered qi from the air they breathe in.

“Ah!”

Mok Gyeong-un showed an interested expression at this basic knowledge about internal energy that he learned for the first time.

It seemed that martial arts were not simply about moving the body like ordinary martial arts.

As if he had realized something, Mok Gyeong-un asked Cheong-ryeong.

“Then can the energy pulled and attached by the Ritual of Binding also be gathered like the qigong you mentioned?”

-No.

“What?”

-Even if you absorb the opponent’s qi with the Ritual of Binding, you cannot make it your own.

“What do you mean you can’t make it your own?”

-Qi, when oxidized like this, may be unnoticeable, but it takes on unique attributes according to each sect’s breathing methods, qigong, or qi circulation system.

“What are attributes?”

-It means it takes on unique properties. However, once it takes on those unique properties, if the person is not adapted to or trained in it, their danjeon cannot endure it.

“That means...”

-Yes. Absorbing someone else’s internal energy is useless for making it your own.

“Ah, that’s a bit unfortunate. I thought it would be a way to quickly increase qi.”

-You think becoming a master is that easy? Well, don’t be disappointed. The uses of the Ritual of Binding are endless.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un asked with a puzzled look.

“Isn’t it meaningless if the absorbed qi dissipates anyway?”

-The absorbed qi may disperse, but it can still be utilized temporarily as it flows due to the Ritual of Binding. For example, try focusing that dispersing energy into your fist.

“How do I do that?”

-By circulating qi...ah.

Cheong-ryeong took a puff from her pipe with an exasperated look.

She seemed frustrated because Mok Gyeong-un knew absolutely nothing about martial arts.

Exhaling a thick smoke, she said.

–Phew. I can’t believe I’m sitting here teaching this kind of thing to a mortal.

“...”

Mok Gyeong-un silently scratched his head.

-Tsk tsk, let’s exclude complicated things like qi circulation methods for now. The important thing is visualization.

“Visualization?”

-Yes. If you remember how it moved when you absorbed the energy with the Ritual of Binding earlier, focus on moving that sensation to the desired part.

Visualization (心想).

Although Cheong-ryeong spoke of it casually, this was a method used by masters who had reached a certain level when seeking a higher realm of ascension.

Introspecting the mind is visualization.

Strictly speaking, this was not a concept that a novice who had never learned martial arts could do.

However, Mok Gyeong-un had something different from ordinary people.

‘Extreme concentration.’

Cheong-ryeong judged that Mok Gyeong-un possessed that.

She didn’t know if his talent was outstanding or not since he had never started martial arts, but his unique concentration was unbelievable.

That’s why she suggested trying visualization.

'Will it really work?'

He doesn't know the concepts of meridians and qi circulation methods.

However, it was the first time she had told someone to try moving true qi to a desired location with just visualization.

If done incorrectly, it could lead to qi deviation, but since the qi wasn't fixed in the danjeon in the first place and was originally dispersing qi, it was worth a try.

'Hmm.'

Mok Gyeong-un closed his eyes and focused on the dispersing qi.

He tried to recall the sensation of how the qi entered his body through the Ritual of Binding when it first came in.

Then, in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes, blood vessels were traced along his palms and wrists.

'Naegwan...Onyu...Geukmun...Gongchoe...Susamni...Sohe...Hyeopbaek[1]...'

Surprisingly, Mok Gyeong-un knew the acupuncture points and meridians.

This was because he had learned it from his grandfather along with herbology, so he could remember it even with his eyes closed.

Therefore, Mok Gyeong-un could also recall the path through which the true qi absorbed by the Ritual of Binding had flowed in and expanded his danjeon.

'Then in reverse...'

The warm energy moved along Gihae (Sea of Qi), Eumgyo (Ren meridian), Hwangyu (Du meridian), Geogwal (Stomach meridian), Gumi (liver meridian), Seongi (Spleen meridian), and Yeomcheon (Gallbladder meridian).

The small amount of remaining qi flowed backwards along Gisa and Hyeopbaek towards the wrist.

The qi that reached the Naegwan acupoint in the wrist concentrated in the fist.

-Clench!

Mok Gyeong-un clenched his fist.

It felt like some strength had entered it.

'With this kind of power...'

Mok Gyeong-un approached the wall of the cave.

And he drove his fist, in which the warm energy had gathered, into the wall.

-Thud! Crack!

At that moment, the part of the cave wall where Mok Gyeong-un's fist was driven in caved in about two finger joints deep, and cracks spread around it.

'Oho.'

Is this the power of internal energy?

-!?

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un like this, a glint of surprise flashed in Cheong-ryeong's eyes.

She really didn't expect him to be able to do this in one go.

He said it was visualization, but moving internal energy is nearly impossible if one doesn't know the qi circulation paths.

Yet he really did it.

'...what the .... is this guy?'

Cheong-ryeong was genuinely curious.

She had seen numerous talents in her lifetime, but this was the first time she had seen someone who had such outstanding instincts despite not having learned martial arts until the age of sixteen or seventeen.

-Hah...

What if this guy had started learning martial arts from a young age?

It made her wonder.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un turned his head towards Cheong-ryeong and said.

"I think I understand now why people talk about martial arts so much. If you learn this, it would be much easier to kill people."

At Mok Gyeong-un's nonchalant words, the corners of Cheong-ryeong's lips twitched for a moment.

This guy knew exactly what the essence of martial arts was.

Achieving enlightenment through martial arts and such was all nonsense.

The essence of martial arts was how efficiently one could kill the opponent.

Cheong-ryeong put the pipe in her mouth, crossed her arms, and said.

-The first technique, the Ritual of Binding, is just the foundation of the Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques[2]. Even mastering one technique has endless subtleties.

"Excellent. I want to properly learn these endless subtleties. Can you teach me like now?"

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Cheong-ryeong's expression froze for a moment.

She had no intention of teaching him in the first place.

However, she had become talkative without realizing it due to Mok Gyeong-un's unbelievable concentration and innate talent.

-Ha, I almost fell for it, you damn mortal. How dare you try to trick me.

"What?"

-You think I would do you a favor? No way.

"But we'll have to continue working together, so wouldn't it be better to cooperate?"

-That won't happen.

Then she swiftly turned her head away.

Seeing her suddenly change her attitude, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head.

"Cheong-ryeong?"

-...

She doesn't even pretend to listen.

There was no other way.

Since he wasn't the type to go out of his way to appease someone, Mok Gyeong-un didn't call out to Cheong-ryeong anymore.

Rather, he was more interested in these Eight Thought-Shattering Techniques.

According to Cheong-ryeong's words, there were seven more techniques like this Ritual of Binding, but how was this possible with just thirty characters?

Whoever created it must have been truly amazing.

However, no matter how brilliant Mok Gyeong-un was, he didn't know much about martial arts, so it was difficult to create other techniques with just thirty characters.

'What a pity.'

For now, he had to be satisfied with the Ritual of Binding.

Since he wasn't familiar with it yet, it seemed like it could be used in various ways if he studied it well.

Having organized his thoughts, Mok Gyeong-un was about to take steps to dispose of Jo Il-sang's corpse.

But then,

'!'

Mok Gyeong-un frowned and looked down at his lower abdomen.

'What is this?'

When he had the warm energy, no, the internal energy absorbed from Jo Il-sang, he hadn't noticed, but that chilly energy remained as it was.

'Why is this?'

The internal energy had clearly dissipated, leaving no trace behind.

But this chilly energy remained intact.

Although the amount was significantly smaller compared to the absorbed internal energy, it remained intact below his navel.

'Strange.'

Even Cheong-ryeong didn't properly know about this cold energy.

He thought about asking her, but soon gave up.

She didn't seem like she would answer even if he asked now.

'It's not bad to find out for myself.'

This kind of trouble was a form of interest.

Mok Gyeong-un raised the corners of his mouth.

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In an empty room with only one lantern lit.

-Clang!

The female warrior with one eye placed a pouch full of silver coins on the table.

She was Ho-aeng, a guard warrior of Lady Seok, the wife of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor's master.

"This is consolation money sent by Madam."

"..."

"As I mentioned earlier, if you can handle the matter, she said she will pay four hundred silver coins."

After saying that, she looked at the lantern on the table.

The lantern still showed no reaction.

It might be because of the death of her colleague Myo-sin.

The waiting woman opened her mouth.

"If this is insufficient..."

-Swish!

Before she could finish her words, the lantern suddenly went out.

Seeing this, Ho-aeng gulped and stood up from her seat and went outside.

The extinguished lantern was a signal that the request was accepted.

Therefore, there was no reason to stay any longer.

-Tap tap!

She, who had come out with quick steps, looked at the dilapidated building that seemed like it would collapse at any moment.

This place was the headquarters of the diviners, the Ghostly Pavilion.

Every time she came here, she felt chills and uneasiness for no reason.

She hurriedly mounted her horse.

Shortly after she left, voices were heard from inside the Ghostly Pavilion.

“It must’ve been Sal (殺, murder).”

The first was an old man’s voice.

Next, a middle-aged man’s voice was heard.

“It’s certain. Sect Leader.”

“What do you think, Sak?”

At that question, a woman’s voice was heard.

“If Sal is certain, then Elder Myo-sin must have been devoured by an evil ghost. But that third young master concerns me.”

“The sect leader also feels the same. Sal (殺) is originally an act of cursing or possessing someone with a vengeful ghost. But it is said that the maid was summoned by the third young master’s call. That means...”

“Doesn’t it mean he is controlling the vengeful ghost?”

“Hmm. This is no ordinary matter.”

The reason they were taking this seriously was as follows.

“If it’s to the extent of summoning the maid and feeding Sal, the vengeful ghost must be at least of the Yellow ghost level. Is it possible to use such a high-level vengeful ghost as a familiar?”

Vengeful ghosts cannot be used as familiar.

That was the orthodox view of the diviners.

Supernatural beings or the benevolent souls of creatures with pure energy could be used as familiar, but fallen vengeful ghosts were beings that needed to be exorcised or sealed.

“Vengeful ghosts are beings that cannot be controlled in the first place. The third young master may have had his soul seized by the vengeful ghost.”

-Bang!

“Then we cannot leave him be! Sect Leader, please entrust this matter to me.”

“You will go, Sak?”

“Yes. I will appease Elder Myo-sin’s vengeful ghost and deal with the third young master.”

At those words, the sect leader issued an order that it was decided.

“I grant you permission. With you, who can control the Guyeo (armadillo with a bird’s beak)[3] as a familiar, exorcising it should be easy. Go.”

“I accept the sect leader’s order.”

With the answer, a beautiful woman with one white eye appeared from the darkness.

The woman who appeared naturally took the pouch of silver coins on the table.

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-Thud!

The sleepy-eyed guard Go Chan brought a small brazier in front of Mok Gyeong-un’s bed.

He, who had stayed up almost all night keeping watch, was exhausted.

When he asked if he could just close his eyes for a bit since dawn was approaching, he was a little annoyed at being asked to do this.

Go Chan asked with a puzzled look.

“Why did you have me bring this out, young master?”

“I have something to burn.”

“Something to burn, you say? If there’s something like that, you can just have me...”

“I want to see for myself that it’s completely burned.”

“What in the world are you trying to burn...!?”

Suddenly, Go Chan’s eyes went wide.

What Mok Gyeong-un pulled out was none other than,

[Ignited Wood Sword Formation]

‘It, it was real after all.’

So it was true that he found out the location of the secret manuals from the sect leader through the evil ghosts.

To think that the sect leader’s exclusive martial arts manual, the Ignited Wood Sword Formation, was in Mok Gyeong-un’s hands.

Go Chan gulped and frowned.

“No. Young master. Don’t tell me you’re going to burn that?”

In response to Go Chan’s anxious cry, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and replied.

“I’m going to burn it.”

At this, Go Chan was startled and tried to dissuade him.

“B-Burn it, you say? Young master, what you have in your hands is an exclusive secret manual that only the sect leader can learn. How could you...”

“I’m burning it because I need to.”

-Rip!

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un left only the cover and the second page of the Ignited Wood Sword Formation manual and threw the rest into the brazier.

It happened before he could even say anything to stop him.

-Crackle!

Go Chan looked at Mok Gyeong-un in disbelief.

Does this crazy guy really not know the importance of this secret manual?

To the dumbfounded Go Chan, Mok Gyeong-un nonchalantly said.

“Why are you looking at me like that? I don’t quite like the look in your eyes.”

“...Young master. Even if it’s difficult for you to learn martial arts at your age, if you have that, you could make use of it somehow.”

“That’s all the more reason to burn it.”

“If you burn it, then how will you...”

“I have it here, you know.”

Mok Gyeong-un smiled and tapped his head with his finger.

‘!?’

Seeing that, Go Chan’s eyes widened in surprise.

Does he mean he’s burning it because he memorized the entire secret manual?

No, then he should have told me from the beginning.

He was just surprised thinking he was throwing away that precious manual.

As he was about to say this, Mok Gyeong-un took out the secret manual of the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique (燃木化心法) this time and, just as he had done before, tore out everything except the cover and the first two pages and put them in the brazier.

-Crackle!

At this, Go Chan asked with an expression of utter incomprehension.

“What in the world are you doing?”

In response to this question, Mok Gyeong-un handed him the secret manuals of the Ignited Wood Sword Formation and Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique, with only the unburned covers and two pages of content remaining.

“What do I do with these?”

“Take one of those secret manuals each to the madam and the second young master. Oh, at dawn.”

“Pardon?”

“Just deliver them and come back. Without saying anything.”

Go Chan furrowed his brow.

what the .... is this guy trying to do?

He couldn't fathom it at all.

But what could he do? With his life on the line, he had no choice but to do as he was told.

“...I understand. Then, before I go, may I get some sleep until morning?”

“Go ahead.”

“Thank you.”

“Oh, I forgot to mention. I just killed that guard warrior sent by the second young master.”

“...”

Go Chan was wide awake now.

Chapter 23

‘shit. At this rate, I won't be able to keep my life.’

Guard Go Chan was heading towards Hyehwa Hall, the residence of the madam.

In the end, he couldn't sleep well.

No, it would be strange to fall asleep after hearing that.

Although Go Chan couldn't confront Mok Gyeong-un about why he did it, he was at a loss as to what to do about it.

‘That crazy bastard. I clearly told him to just send him away.’

He never thought Mok Gyeong-un would kill Jo Il-sang, the second young master's guard warrior.

He thought he would at least have that much discernment.

what the .... is he thinking?

'If that bastard Mok Eun-pyeong finds out that his guard warrior was killed, there will surely be trouble.'

Not just trouble.

Knowing his personality, he might try to retaliate against Mok Gyeong-un right away.

Although he can't kill him since the Manor Master is still alive, he might break his limbs or try to kill his guard in the same way.

'This is driving me crazy.'

Go Chan felt a headache coming on.

No, why did he have to kill that guy and make things worse?

[What about the corpse?]

[I took care of that, so you don't have to worry.]

How did he take care of it?

Did he hide it in a secret place where he found the secret manual?

Even so, how long will it last?

He was originally sent with a purpose.

If he doesn't show up, naturally he will be suspected.

'What do I do about this?'

Now that Go Il-sang was killed, it felt extremely uneasy to take this empty secret manual to the second young master.

He regretted it again.

He should have just told his senior Gam everything.

But that opportunity had already passed.

Mok Gyeong-un had deceived senior Gam too much out of fear, so if he were to inform him, he would no longer trust him.

Senior Gam was sensitive and didn't trust others easily.

'It was even worse during his active duty.'

Recalling that time, there was a huge discrepancy with his current appearance.

He was merciless not only to enemies but even more so to traitors.

'But it's really strange.'

Even though he remembers Guard Gam's appearance, why is he more afraid of that bastard?

He didn't know how it turned out like this.

"Phew."

Come to think of it, where did senior go?

When he was really with Mok Gyeong-un, he never left his side unless it was time to take turns resting or there was an urgent matter.

But yesterday, he was away for almost half a day.

'What is it?'

Could it be that he's secretly proceeding with something without even knowing it himself?

Go Chan narrowed his eyes.

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At the same time.

In the residence of the second young master, Mok Eun-pyeong.

Mok Eun-pyeong, who was sitting on the desk with his arms crossed, was glaring at Guard Gam with a cold gaze.

Guard Gam found it difficult to guess the situation as he was suddenly summoned without knowing the reason.

One thing that was certain was that Mok Eun-pyeong was quite angry.

At this, Guard Gam carefully opened his mouth.

“Young master. What is the matter?”

“That’s what I want to ask.”

“Pardon?”

“It’s quite a coincidence. I had a bad feeling and tested it out, and every time that small uneasiness was right, it made me very displeased.”

What in the world is he talking about?

Guard Gam slightly furrowed his brows.

‘Could it be that he noticed it was fake?’

But it didn’t seem to match the way he was speaking.

Right now, Mok Eun-pyeong’s tone was clearly expressing hostility towards him.

-Thud!

Guard Gam knelt on one knee on the floor, joined his hands in a salute, and said.

“Young master. I truly do not understand what you are saying. If you tell me what the matter is...”

“What the matter is? Ha!”

With that, Mok Eun-pyeong threw an inkstone that was on the desk.

He could have easily dodged it, but Guard Gam had to bear Mok Eun-pyeong’s anger, so he took it head-on.

-Smack!

-Drip drip!

Blood flowed down from Guard Gam’s forehead.

It hurt because he didn’t protect his body with internal energy, but he had learned to endure pain through breathing, so Guard Gam tried his best not to show it.

Glaring at such Guard Gam, Mok Eun-pyeong said.

“I sent one of my guards to confirm that Mok Gyeong-un had lost his martial arts.”

'...So that's what it was.'

As expected, there was a reason.

But something is strange.

'If that's all, there's no reason for him to be this angry.'

The fake Mok Gyeong-un had not learned martial arts.

If he confirmed that, he should rather let go of his suspicions, so why is he showing such hostility?

Then, Mok Eun-pyeong continued.

"But that guard did not return."

"Pardon?"

Guard Gam raised his head, looking perplexed.

What does that mean?

"You don't understand what I'm saying? The guard I sent to check whether that bastard had lost his martial arts or not disappeared without a trace."

'!?'

That couldn't be.

Guard Gam moved his eyes to look at the guards in the room.

One of the three guards was missing.

'Jo Il-sang.'

He was about to reach the first-rate level.

In terms of skill alone, Go Chan, who is currently serving as a guard, cannot handle him at all.

But how did he disappear?

Guard Gam parted his lips.

"That's impossible."

“What?”

“I have never lied to you. That bastard... no, young master Mok Gyeong-un is in a state where he cannot use martial arts. And the one named Go Chan, who is guarding young master Mok Gyeong-un, is also only a second-rate expert, so he cannot handle Guard Jo Il-sang.”

He could confidently assure that.

However, there was not a shred of trust in Mok Eun-pyeong’s eyes.

In the first place, he had not built any trust, and now that the guard did not return, his suspicion only grew.

“Would you believe that if it were you?”

“It’s the truth. If you can’t trust me, I can even bet this arm.”

Guard Gam pulled up the sleeve of his right arm and spoke.

For a warrior to bet his own arm was not much different from betting everything.

At his strong attitude, Mok Eun-pyeong snorted and said.

“Bet your arm? Fine. Then prove that what you’re saying is true.”

“What do you mean by prove?”

“If what you’re saying is really true, there’s no way Guard Jo would be defeated by those guys. Then I’ll give you about two hours. Find Guard Jo and bring him here.”

“...I understand.”

Guard Gam’s voice dropped low.

It felt like something was really twisted.

It seemed he needed to directly confirm what had happened.

To him, Mok Eun-pyeong warned in a voice filled with murderous intent.

“If you can’t find him, it’d be best to prepare yourself to not only lose your arm but also that miserable life of yours.”

“I will keep that in mind.”

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Having come out of the residence of the second young master Mok Eun-pyeong, Guard Ham wore a terrifyingly hardened face.

He suppressed his emotions and hurriedly moved his steps towards the Medicinal Hall.

Then he ran into someone at the crossroads.

“Huh? S-Senior?”

“You!”

It was Guard Go Chan.

Go Chan couldn't hide his perplexity.

He never thought he would run into Guard Gam like this while secretly carrying out Mok Gyeong-un's orders.

Seeing Go Chan, Guard Gam lowered his voice with an angry face and said.

“What are you doing here? I'm sure I told you never to leave his side even for a moment.”

“That's...”

At his attitude of not being able to answer properly, Guard Gam's eyes sharpened.

Guard Gam put his finger on the dagger hidden in his wrist and said.

“Don't tell me you plotted something with that bastard?”

“PI-Plot?”

“But why did you disobey my orders?”

“It's not like that...”

Go Chan's mind went blank, and he was at a loss as to what to say.

He couldn't talk about the empty secret manual he had stashed in his bosom to give to Mok Eun-pyeong.

‘shit.’

There was no other way.

Eventually, Go Chan ended up lying.

“Actually, the Inner Manor Master called me saying he had something to ask about what happened at the main hall yesterday...”

“What? The Inner Manor Master?”

Guard Gam frowned.

If you follow this path, you can go to the Inner Manor Master’s office.

And although they were guard warriors, they were members of the Yeon Mok Sword Manor, so naturally they had to move if the Inner Manor Master summoned them.

However,

‘This guy?’

He saw Go Chan’s eyes trembling faintly.

Ordinary people might find it hard to notice, but he, as a trained person, could.

He was clearly nervous.

If the Inner Manor Master had called him, there was no reason for him to be reprimanded for leaving his post despite having his orders, so there was no reason to be this nervous.

Guard Gam moved his eyes and looked around.

There were some signs of people at a slight distance, but no one stood out or was close by.

Confirming this, Guard Gam pressed a vital point on Go Chan’s neck and pushed him against the wall.

-Slam! Thud!

“Ugh!”

“Do you have a death wish?”

“Se-Senior?”

“Speak. What are you hiding?”

“Hiding? I’m really not hiding anything...”

-Swish!

Guard Gam aimed his dagger at the area near Go Chan’s heart and said.

“One of the second Mok Eun-pyeong’s guards disappeared.”

“...”

“The target he went to find is that fake. But are you going to pretend you don’t know about this too?”

‘D-shit...’

It was exposed so quickly.

The situation he had feared unfolded.

No, is this really the situation he had feared?

How did senior, who wasn’t even there at night, find out about this?

“Wa-Wait a moment. Senior, how do you know about that... Could it be that you’ve already made contact with the second young master’s side?”

He already knew that he was trying to switch sides.

But he hadn’t decided on who yet.

But knowing the circumstances on the second Mok Eun-pyeong’s side means he has already switched sides to them.

“Why did you do it without any consultation...”

-Grip!

“Gasp!”

As Guard Gam’s hand gripping the vital point on his neck tightened, Go Chan couldn’t continue his words.

To him who was suffering, Guard Gam said.

“Do you think I’m in a position to consult and report every little thing to you? And are you in any position to question me about that right now?”

“Th-This is a bit...”

Go Chan, whose pain intensified, pleaded.

At this, Guard Gam loosened his grip and spoke into his ear.

“What are you hiding? Speak the truth. If not...”

-Stab!

The tip of the dagger dug into his chest.

As the dagger went inside, Guard Gam frowned at the foreign sensation.

He had tried to slightly pierce the flesh, but it felt different.

At this, Guard Gam put his hand into Go Chan’s chest inside his clothes.

“Wa-Wait...”

-Grip!

“Ack!”

Soon, the secret manual of the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique with only two pages of content was revealed in Guard Gam’s hand.

Seeing this, Guard Gam’s eyes went wide.

“This is?”

‘I’m doomed.’

Go Chan tightly closed his eyes.

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-Bang!

The door of the Medicinal Hall swung open and Guard Gam entered with a terrifying face.

Inside, there were as many as three medicinal hall workers, but without paying any attention to them, Guard Gam strode towards Mok Gyeong-un, who was reading a book with only his upper body raised on the bed.

Guard Gam approached right in front of him.

He parted his lips in a small voice that only Mok Gyeong-un could hear.

“What have you done?”

At his words, Mok Gyeong-un replied without taking his eyes off the book.

“What are you talking about?”

“Phew.”

Guard Gam let out a deep sigh.

Then he quickly revealed a book from his bosom.

[Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique]

It was the secret manual of the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique.

Guard Gam spoke in an irritated voice.

“How did you get this?”

At this, Mok Gyeong-un slightly turned his head to look at the secret manual of the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique and chuckled.

“Laughing?”

“It seems Guard Go Chan was unlucky.”

“What?”

“The fact that you brought it means you took it from Guard Go Chan, right?”

“...”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s appearance of not losing his composure at all, Guard Gam was dumbfounded for a moment.

Not only his insight but this guy always maintained his composure.

Even though he was caught by him for plotting something, seeing him maintain this appearance, he was indeed a bold fellow.

Well, since he was this brazen, he must have killed the real Mok Gyeong-un too.

However, he could not forgive him for stabbing him in the back like this.

-Swish!

Guard Gam took out a dagger at an angle not visible to everyone and aimed it at Mok Gyeong-un's left rib.

And he spoke in a low voice.

“what the .... did you do to Go Chan?”

“What did I do?”

“What did you do that made him keep his mouth shut?”

Before coming to find Mok Gyeong-un, Guard Gam took Go Chan to his residence and interrogated him.

He broke his bones and cut off two of his fingers.

But he still didn't open his mouth until the end.

[Speak.]

[...]

[I said speak!]

[...]

Seeing that, Guard Gam was genuinely curious.

Although this bastard was different from ordinary people, he wasn't someone Go Chan couldn't handle, so he couldn't understand why he was afraid of him.

If it were up to him, he wanted to torture him all day to find out the reason.

However, he had no time.

[I'll give you about two hours.]

'shit!'

The time the second young master Mok Eun-pyeong gave him was at most two hours.

During that time, he had to find Jo Il-sang, that guy's guard warrior.

Otherwise, Mok Eun-pyeong would surely try to kill him.

So in the end, he left Go Chan behind and rushed to Mok Gyeong-un, the person in question.

However,

"I really don't know what you're talking about."

Mok Gyeong-un feigned ignorance.

His shoulders even shrugged, and anger surged up.

-Clench!

Guard Gam, who was grinding his teeth, soon changed his question.

"Fine. I'll find out later what you did to that Go Chan guy. Then tell me. Did you see Jo Il-sang, the guard warrior of young master Mok Eun-pyeong?"

Jo Il-sang, the guard warrior of the second Mok Eun-pyeong.

Since he was a master nearing the first-rate level, there was no way for Mok Gyeong-un, who had not learned martial arts, and Go Chan, who was merely a second-rate expert, to do anything to him.

It should be obvious, but what was this uneasy feeling?

Then Mok Gyeong-un said.

"Ah. That person who came to find me last night wearing a mask?"

"...Right. I'm talking about him."

"I saw him."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Guard Gam collected himself and asked.

"You didn't do anything to him, right?"

“Oh come on. What could I do? What power do I have?”

Mok Gyeong-un waved his hand lightly.

At those words, Guard Gam thought that he indeed couldn't have harmed him.

However,

“How could a person whose danjeon is damaged and lost his martial arts possibly do anything to someone like that?”

‘!?’

Guard Gam frowned.

What does this mean?

The fact that this bastard knows that he talked as if he had lost his martial arts...

“You...”

Then, Mok Gyeong-un leaned close to his ear and said with a low voice, laughing.

“You went through all the trouble to switch sides to the second young master... but this fake one didn't cooperate and killed the second young master's guard. What to do about this?”

‘!!!!!!’

Instantly, Guard Gam's expression stiffened rigidly.

Chapter 24

“You went through all the trouble to switch sides to the second young master... but this fake one didn't cooperate and killed the second young master's guard. What to do about this?”

‘!?’

The moment he heard Mok Gyeong-un's words, Guard Gam's expression stiffened.

The death of Jo Il-sang, the second Mok Eun-pyeong's guard warrior.

He thought that had the lowest probability.

The martial prowess of a warrior on the verge of reaching first-rate level could not be dealt with simply because he was strong.

'No way.'

Guard Gam looked at Mok Gyeong-un with shaking eyes.

It couldn't be true, but he couldn't not believe it either.

The fact that the boy knew he had switched sides and had told the second young master Mok Eun-pyeong that Mok Gyeong-un had lost his martial arts was proof of that.

"You... really..."

"Yes. I killed him."

"How did you, to someone approaching first-rate..."

"I hung him upside down and slit his throat to kill him."

"What?"

"He pitifully pleaded for his life. I guess whether he's a master or not, he didn't want to die."

Mok Gyeong-un smiled as he said that.

Guard Gam, whose eyes met with him, felt a chill down his spine.

Mok Gyeong-un's ominous gaze felt as if it was strangling him.

'This guy is really...'

A homicidal maniac.

Once again, the fact that this fake guy was a death row inmate who had killed numerous people came to mind.

He himself had also been an assassin who killed many people, but he quit because he didn't enjoy killing someone and felt repulsed by it.

However, this guy was in a different realm from ordinary people.

He enjoyed being close to death.

'shit.'

For a moment, Guard Gam's mind became complicated.

The time the second Mok Eun-pyeong gave him was two hours.

He told him to find his guard Jo Il-sang within that time, but he was already dead.

In the end, his confident declaration, even betting his arm, became meaningless.

It was the worst situation.

[If you can't find him, it'd be best to prepare yourself to not only lose your arm but also that miserable life of yours.]

Mok Eun-pyeong's murderous warning echoed in his head.

'I went through the trouble of switching sides.'

It was cut off in less than a day.

Who would have thought such an absurd situation would occur?

Guard Gam's mouth was dry.

Then suddenly,

'...Don't tell me this guy intentionally killed him?'

Come to think of it, that was it.

Since this guy was a fake, he had to be careful about everything.

No matter how unpredictable this guy was, someone as cunning as him couldn't possibly not know his own situation.

But the fact that he killed the second young master's guard...

'He killed Mok Eun-pyeong's guard warrior because I abandoned him and switched sides. Ha...'

It was truly astounding.

How could he be so cunning?

By killing Mok Eun-pyeong's guard, the boy put him in a dilemma.

Now he couldn't switch sides to any other young masters.

Who would trust him?

-Clench!

Realizing this cunning bastard's intention, strength entered his fist.

To think that a homicidal maniac who hadn't even learned martial arts was pushing him like this.

'Because of this guy, everything I had prepared...'

It all went to waste.

He was furious.

"Your emotions sure change a lot? Seeing your face turn red, you must be angry."

At Mok Gyeong-un's sneering voice, Guard Gam glared at him.

He wanted to kill this guy right away.

No, should I kill him?

Even if staying in the Yeon Mok Sword Manor had virtually no meaning since the second young master Mok Eun-pyeong would be after his life anyway...

'Ah!'

Suddenly, Guard Gam's gaze turned to his own chest.

In his chest were the cover and two pages of content from the Ignited Wood Heart Transformation Technique.

Seeing the content of only two pages, Guard Gam realized.

This was the real thing.

'Even though that Go Chan bastard kept his mouth shut until the end, the fact that he had this...'

It meant that this Mok Gyeong-un guy had obtained the secret manual.

How did he get the secret manual?

He was curious, but that wasn't the important thing.

-Stab!

Guard Gam pressed the dagger into Mok Gyeong-un's ribs and whispered.

"The rest of the secret manual... you have it, don't you?"

"Secret manual?"

-Tap tap!

Guard Gam tapped his own chest and said.

"I'm talking about this. This."

"Ah. That?"

"Yeah."

"Of course I have it."

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Guard Gam's face momentarily lit up.

As expected, there was always a hole to rise through.

'It's done! It's done!'

The Manor Master's life was hanging by a thread.

Since a successor had not been appointed, the opinions of the retainers were divided.

In this situation, if one possessed a secret manual that only the sect leader could learn or had a bloodline that had mastered that martial art, one would be closest to becoming the successor.

'It can replace the price of my life.'

The second young master Mok Eun-pyeong also had no choice but to covet this secret manual.

If he had this, he could offset it with the life of the dead guard Jo Il-sang.

-Stab!

Guard Gam pressed the dagger even closer and said.

"I won't beat around the bush. If you don't want to die, hand over the secret manual."

“You seem to really need the secret manual.”

“I don’t have time for word games with you.”

“You’re in quite a desperate situation, aren’t you?”

“You really have a death wish, don’t you?”

“No way. I just don’t think I’m the one in a desperate situation, so I’m asking if it’s okay to threaten me like this.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Guard Gam snorted and said.

“Don’t think of me as the same as Go Chan or Jo Il-sang. Killing you on the spot without even letting you breathe is no big deal for me.”

Even though he had retired, his original profession was an assassin.

The ways to kill numbered in the dozens, no, hundreds.

And he was a first-rate master.

The gap between someone approaching first-rate and a true first-rate master was clear.

He could kill the likes of Jo Il-sang with one hand.

“Don’t provoke me any further.”

“This is scary...”

-Stab!

Before he could even finish his words, the tip of the dagger slightly dug into the flesh between Mok Gyeong-un’s ribs.

“I won’t ask again. If you don’t talk about the secret manual, I will fully drive in the dagger. If it penetrates through here, it’s certain death.”

“...You’ll lose even more if I die here.”

As he said that, Mok Gyeong-un gestured with his eyes towards the medicinal hall workers.

It meant if he could really kill him with them watching.

At this, Guard Gam let out a faint breath.

“Phew.”

Then soon,

-Swoosh!

He removed his hand from Mok Gyeong-un and launched his body towards the medicinal hall workers.

His movement was so fast that Guard Gam, who had instantly approached where they were, stabbed their vital points with lightning-fast hand gestures.

-Stab stab stab!

The medicinal hall workers instantly died with their vital points stabbed.

Even though the dagger was stabbed, hardly any blood came out, and there were no screams.

It was a clean skill befitting a former assassin.

‘The second young master should be able to handle about three medicinal hall workers.’

He was confident that even if he didn’t know, the second young master could keep their mouths shut.

That’s why Guard Gam was taking a gamble.

“Are you still certain that I can’t kill you?”

Guard Gam approached Mok Gyeong-un and spoke.

He thought that to this extent, no matter who it was, they would be somewhat tense.

However,

-Chuckle!

‘Laughing?’

Mok Gyeong-un laughed.

Even though three medicinal hall workers died in an instant.

He’s laughing after seeing that?

“You really don’t seem to grasp reality. Then you’ll have to directly experience the pain with your body to open your mouth.”

-Swish!

Guard Gam used a lightness skill to instantly close the distance.

Then he used the Grappling Hand technique on Mok Gyeong-un.

-Tap tap tap tap!

Guard Gam grabbed his arm, twisted it behind, grasped one of Mok Gyeong-un’s right fingers, placed the dagger against it, and said.

“You seem to have quite a high tolerance for pain.”

Guard Gam recalled the first time he saw Mok Gyeong-un.

Even when he was locked in a prison cell and pelted with stones by onlookers, he didn’t let out a single groan.

Seeing that, he thought he was a monster.

“But you know, even if you’re a monster, it’s not that you don’t feel pain. I know how to maximize that pain.”

-Stab!

The dagger dug into his finger.

Guard Gam smiled fiendishly and said.

“I’ll shave off the flesh of your fingers line by line like peeling a fruit. It’ll be a pain you’ve never experienced in your life.”

“Is that so?”

“Let’s see how long you can maintain that composure.”

Guard Gam tried to tilt the blade of the dagger upwards.

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un opened his mouth.

“Before you start, I have something to tell you.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the corners of Guard Gam’s mouth slightly rose.

Of course.

No matter how much of a homicidal maniac he was, he was only 17 years old.

In this situation, no matter how much composure he showed, he would eventually fall into fear of the upcoming pain.

“Speak.”

“I was wondering how to utilize it, but I’m really grateful.”

“What?”

What nonsense is this?

What is he utilizing?

‘!?’

At that moment, Guard Gam felt a foreign sensation.

It felt like something was sticking to his palm that was grasping Mok Gyeong-un’s finger.

Thinking he was gripping too tightly, he slightly loosened his strength, but,

-Stick!

The palm stuck to the finger.

‘What is this...’

Thinking something was strange, Guard Gam tried to draw internal energy to his hand to detach his palm.

However,

-Whoosh!

At that moment, the internal energy he had focused on his palm was felt draining out.

“Gasp!”

Guard Gam could only be perplexed by the sudden phenomenon.

His hand was adhered, and his internal energy was rapidly draining out, and even the flow of qi circulation was disrupted, making it difficult to detach his palm.

A considerable amount of internal energy had already been absorbed.

His left hand and left arm holding the fingers were about to lose strength.

'Where did this guy learn such sorcery?'

This was not a righteous martial art.

Absorbing someone else's internal energy?

Already 10% of his internal energy had been absorbed, and if this continued, a real disaster might occur.

"Let go!"

Guard Gam tried to strike Mok Gyeong-un's neck with his fist holding the dagger in reverse.

To knock him out.

But Mok Gyeong-un twisted his neck, and it hit his shoulder instead.

"Pft!"

However, a first-rate master was still first-rate.

Blood spewed from Mok Gyeong-un's mouth after being hit by the fist containing internal energy.

Nevertheless, Mok Gyeong-un did not let go of the finger.

"Ugh! You bastard!"

-Thud thud!

The enraged Guard Gam wildly struck Mok Gyeong-un's neck and back.

Despite being in pain from the fists containing internal energy, Mok Gyeong-un did not let go of his hand until the end.

'This monster!'

At this, Guard Gam finally stabbed the dagger between Mok Gyeong-un's ribs.

-Stab!

“Huk!”

As the dagger penetrated halfway through the ribs, his breathing was cut off, and the Chakui technique was severed.

The moment the adhesive force disappeared, Guard Gam kicked Mok Gyeong-un's back with his foot and distanced himself.

-Thud!

-Clatter clatter!

Guard Gam, who had retreated about seven steps, looked at his palm with a pale face.

No internal energy was felt in his left hand, which was severely convulsing.

He could circulate it again through qi circulation, but this was the first time he had felt such an uneasy sensation.

Guard Gam glared at the staggering Mok Gyeong-un and said.

“What was that? What kind of sorcery have you learned?”

“Huff... huff...”

Mok Gyeong-un gripped the dagger stuck between his ribs, staggered, and barely regained his posture.

“You're definitely... first-rate.”

“Speak. What was that just now?”

“With just this, it'll be difficult to deal with you.”

-Grind!

Guard Gam gritted his teeth.

Does this insolent bastard think he can handle me just because that sorcery worked for a moment?

If so, that's a miscalculation.

Guard Gam circulated his energy, pulled out the dagger, and assumed a stance.

There would be no more carelessness.

'Let's see if you can still do that kind of thing even after having all your limbs cut off.'

-Swish!

Guard Gam launched his body towards Mok Gyeong-un, who was barely maintaining his posture.

As long as he was careful not to let his palms touch, he could sufficiently deal with him.

-Thud! Stab!

One of the daggers Guard Gam threw stabbed Mok Gyeong-un's thigh.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un staggered.

Not missing that opportunity, Guard Gam took out another dagger hidden in his wrist and tried to throw it at Mok Gyeong-un's shoulder.

It was at that moment.

"Demonic Monk."

-Shiver!

As soon as those words ended, Guard Gam suddenly felt a chill throughout his body and something trying to grasp his wrist from behind.

The startled Guard Gam lowered his arm to avoid that bizarre sensation and launched his body to the side.

And he looked at that spot.

'!?'

Guard Gam frowned.

He clearly felt a spine-chilling, strange sensation from behind, but nothing was visible.

'What did this guy do?'

What is this bizarre feeling when nothing is visible?

The bewildered Guard Gam moved his eyes to look at Mok Gyeong-un.

"What did you just do?"

“What are you referring to?”

“Don’t play dumb. Something clearly tried to grasp my wrist from behind.”

“You certainly have keen senses.”

“...So you did do something.”

“Well, it wasn’t me. It was this friend.”

“This friend?”

What is he talking about?

Could there really be an accomplice?

Guard Gam rolled his eyes around, heightening his senses, and Mok Gyeong-un nonchalantly said to him.

“Since you’re curious, I’ll show you. Demonic Monk.”

It was the moment those words ended.

-Rustle rustle!

‘!!!!!!!!!’

For a moment, Guard Gam doubted his own eyes.

Right in front of his nose, a giant monk wearing blood-soaked robes and a skull rosary appeared like a mirage and was looking down at him with a gruesome gaze.

‘Wh-what the .... is this...’

Guard Gam looked down at his chest where the dagger was stuck.

He had been protecting his body with internal energy, but due to the internal energy imbued in the dagger, it had penetrated deeply.

Guard Gam muttered with a dumbfounded expression.

“But how?”

To him, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said.

“The dagger and the internal energy are both yours.”

## Chapter 25

“The dagger and internal energy are yours.”

‘!?’

Guard Gam’s eyes trembled at Mok Gyeong-un’s words.

The dagger embedded in the center of his chest.

The internal energy contained within the dagger was his own?

Then, did this fellow forcibly take his internal energy and utilize it?

‘..... Impossible.’

Internal energy has its own unique properties.

Even if one takes another’s internal energy, transformed by various schools and sects, it would practically be poison.

Even if internal energy is passed down between master and disciple of the same sect, there is no way to directly utilize it without refining it into one’s own through breathing techniques.

Yet, he used it?

‘Just what is this bastard’s true identity?’

He was definitely not an ordinary civilian.

Guard Gam thought he could control him since he was a death row inmate and not a martial artist.

However, that was a miscalculation.

This fellow possessed strange abilities that he was unaware of.

He even manipulated the bizarre[1].

‘A mistake.’

It was wrong to bring this fellow here.

How foolish to think he could be controlled since he hadn’t learned martial arts.

The truly frightening aspect of this fellow might be that very point.

Using the bizarre to draw his gaze, then throwing a dagger imbued with absorbed internal energy to inflict a fatal wound—he possessed an extraordinary mind capable of such feats.

“Huu…… Huu……”

Guard Gam barely caught his breath.

It was difficult to breathe with the dagger stuck in his chest.

His body temperature was dropping, centered around his chest.

The location was too critical.

The moment he pulled it out, the bleeding might worsen, making it difficult to survive.

-Ssk!

Guard Gam raised his head and glared at Mok Gyeong-un.

In any case, he and this fellow could never go together.

They had to settle this somehow.

Although he was in the same situation, with daggers stuck between his ribs and thigh, moving would be just as difficult for the fellow……

‘!?’

Guard Gam furrowed his brows.

The dagger the fellow had thrown was the one that had been stuck in his own thigh.

However, why was the bleeding so minimal?

In that location, not only the thigh area but also the pants below should have been soaked with blood by now.

Yet, aside from that area, it seemed like blood wasn’t flowing.

‘There’s no way he controlled the bleeding or acupoints.’

He had never seen such a sight before.

Then, what was it?

Guard Gam, who had been staring at Mok Gyeong-un as if looking at a monster, bit his lip.

He had no idea how he ended up making an enemy out of such a bizarre fellow.

However, he still had a secret weapon.

Hadn't he refrained from administering it for this very moment?

".....You..... forgot about..... the poison pill....."

That was none other than the poison pill.

He had fed him the poison pill in advance to prevent him from acting on his own or trying to escape if he broke free from control.

At Guard Gam's words, Mok Gyeong-un parted his lips.

"Ah? The poison pill?"

"That's right."

"I had forgotten about it."

"Ha."

Guard Gam was dumbfounded by Mok Gyeong-un's words.

How could he forget that his life was at stake?

Regardless of what he was thinking, it didn't matter.

That cunning fellow couldn't have forgotten about it.

"Haa..... Haa..... Let's make a deal."

"A deal?"

"Stop fighting like this and just hand over the secret manual. Then, I'll let you go."

"Let me go?"

"Isn't that what you wanted? Staying here is just a fake life anyway, and you'll have to bear the risk of being exposed at any moment."

Mok Gyeong-un nodded at these words.

“Well. That’s true.”

“.....So, I’ll give you the method to create the antidote and some money. Any decent physicians should be able to make it, and with the money, you can start anew. Cough, cough.”

As his speech grew longer, Guard Gam’s voice became hoarse.

If he didn’t receive emergency treatment and perform breathing exercises soon, it would become dangerous.

There was a limit to enduring with internal energy.

“Choose. Fighting like this will only harm both of us anyway.”

“There’s definitely some truth to that.”

Mok Gyeong-un showed a positive response.

Seeing Mok Gyeong-un’s reaction, Guard Gam tried to let out a sigh of relief.

After putting out the urgent fire, it wouldn’t be too late to eliminate him later.

For now, he had to reassure the fellow.

“I’ll give you the tranquilizer first. Each of us will get treatment..... Cough.....”

At that moment, Guard Gam coughed.

It was a cough mixed with blood.

Since he was injured, it could happen, but here, Guard Gam felt a sense of discomfort.

‘The blood.....’

There was a foul smell coming from the blood.

Startled, Guard Gam tried to open his chest.

However, his hands trembled severely, unable to move.

‘Why are my hands.....’

-Thud!

That wasn't the end of it.

Soon, Guard Gam's legs lost strength, and he fell to one knee on the ground.

Then,

"Blegh!"

Guard Gam vomited a handful of black blood.

He had been trying to protect his chest and organs with internal energy, but something was rapidly spreading to his internal organs, causing damage.

'Could it be?'

Guard Gam's eyes widened.

These symptoms were undoubtedly poison.

Something was strange.

This fellow didn't use poison, so why was he poisoned?

As he was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un staggered and slowly approached him, who was suffering.

"Phew. Having this dagger stuck here is quite painful."

"You..... what..... did you do?"

"Ah, I forgot to mention something earlier."

"What?"

"I also gave you my blood, in addition to the dagger and internal energy."

"Blood?"

"Yes. There wasn't enough time to wipe the blood off the dagger that was stuck in my thigh and give it to you. Although it was intentional."

"what the .... are you talking about....."

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said to the confused Guard Gam.

"Of course, you wouldn't understand. I only told Guard Go Chan about it."

“Go Chan?”

“Yes. It’s nothing special. It’s just that since I ate a lot of poisonous herbs from a young age, my blood has toxic properties.”

‘!?’

Guard Gam was dumbfounded by these words.

Toxic blood? What kind of nonsense is this?

Then, is this fellow saying he’s like a poison-bringer of the Sichuan Tang Clan?

‘This bastard, just.....ha!’

It was absurd.

Just how much has this bastard been hiding?

However, that wasn’t the important thing.

He had to somehow use his internal energy to block the poison from spreading, not just around his chest.

He didn’t know what kind of poison it was, but it was so fierce that it felt burning.

“Cough, cough.....”

“It’s painful, isn’t it?”

“You..... You think..... you’ll be safe.....”

“Rushfoil, Betel nut, Monkshood, Greed Dragon.....”

‘!?’

Guard Gam’s eyes shook wildly at the medicinal herbs coming out of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth.

They were all ingredients used in the poison pill.

“Pokeween, Fly Mushroom, Love Parsley.”

“You..... You..... How?”

“Well. I can roughly tell what they are just by lightly touching them with my tongue, can’t I?”

He can tell by tasting them?

Just what is this bastard’s true identity?

Mok Gyeong-un approached the dumbfounded Guard Gam, bent his knees, and met his gaze, saying,

“Actually, I don’t need an antidote or anything.”

“You…… deceived…… me…… Cough, cough…… to play with me?”

In response to that question, Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head slightly and stared intently at Guard Gam’s face.

His face was pale, and his eyes were filled with fear and terror.

Seeing his appearance, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“Whether they are martial artists or top-tier masters, they are not much different from other people in the face of pain and death.”

-Creepy!

The moment he heard those words, Guard Gam felt chills running down his spine.

How could someone wearing a human skin say such things and have such dead eyes?

It didn’t feel like he was facing a human being at all.

This fellow was a demon.

-Tremble, tremble, tremble!

Guard Gam couldn’t stop trembling.

His breathing became rough, and it became difficult to breathe due to fear.

The human heart was indeed cunning.

Just a moment ago, he still thought he had the upper hand over his opponent, so he looked down on him without any tension.

However, now it was completely different.

“You’re trembling.”

“Sa..... Spare my life.”

Guard Gam threw away his pride and begged for his life.

He couldn’t die like this.

He had dreamed of a stable life after leaving that cruel world of assassins where he could die at any moment.

However, losing his life like this was too unfair.

Mok Gyeong-un stroked his own chin.

“Spare your life, you say.”

“I swear..... I swear loyalty. No. I will swear loyalty. Please..... Please spare my life.”

Seeing him pleading, Mok Gyeong-un smiled and said,

“Now, your attitude is to my liking.”

“Oh, I will live only for you, young master.”

“Then, I would be grateful.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Guard Gam’s expression was about to brighten.

However,

-Stab!

“Kuh-urk!”

Just when he thought he was going to spare his life, Mok Gyeong-un pressed the dagger stuck in his chest so hard that even the hilt was embedded.

Mok Gyeong-un whispered into the ear of the suffering Guard Gam.

“Someone who easily switches sides according to their needs, what kind of loyalty are you talking about?”

“Ugh.....”

“It seems it would be more helpful if you just die.”

-Ssk!

“Uwaaah!”

With those words, he covered the mouth and nose of the gasping Guard Gam with his hand.

Guard Gam, with bloodshot eyes, flailed his arms and legs in agony, but Mok Gyeong-un watched him with an expressionless face.

It didn't last long.

The twitching of his whole body soon ceased.

Guard Gam, who had taken his last breath with bloodshot eyes filled with terror.

Mok Gyeong-un stared at him as if he had lost interest, then removed his palm that had been covering his nose and mouth.

‘I handled it faster than I thought. Am I lucky?’

From the beginning, he had planned to kill Guard Gam one way or another.

There was no point in keeping someone alive who knew he was a fake, as it would only become bothersome.

Mok Gyeong-un was contemplating.

‘Should I kill Guard Go Chan too?’

If he got rid of Guard Go Chan as well, there would be no one left who knew the truth.

However, Mok Gyeong-un soon shook his head.

‘Nah, I'll let him live.’

Go Chan was still useful.

It was convenient to have him handle various aftermath tasks.

Moreover,

‘He seems to be quite tight-lipped too.’

He was impressed by the fact that he kept his mouth shut until the end, even under torture.

Mok Gyeong-un didn't care whether it was out of fear or because of the poison.

As long as he didn't backstab him, he was willing to make use of him as much as possible.

-Sting!

Mok Gyeong-un looked at the dagger stuck between his ribs.

No matter how extraordinarily strong his recovery ability was, it was still painful to have this stuck in him.

However, he couldn't pull it out now.

He had to maintain a plausible appearance.

'I wish someone would come quickly.'

It was cumbersome.

"Ah!"

He almost forgot.

Mok Gyeong-un placed his palm on the danjeon area of the dead Guard Gam.

Then, he activated the Ritual of Binding.

It was to confirm one thing.

The internal energy dispersing from the dead man's danjeon was sucked into Mok Gyeong-un's body through the Ritual of Binding.

It was incomparable to the amount from Jo Il-sang.

'A pipe dream.'

However, this was internal energy that would have dissipated and disappeared anyway.

What he was curious about was something else.

It didn't take long for the influx of internal energy to stop.

The reaction he had been expecting didn't occur.

'Is it not?'

Just as he thought that,

At that moment, a chilling and ominous energy of death flowed in from Guard Gam's abdominal area.

It was clearly similar to the energy he had absorbed from Jo Il-sang.

No, the quantity was even greater.

'Aaah!'

There it was.

The energy of death from the dead Guard Gam's body gathered below his navel in the abdominal area.

And it gradually took shape.

Although he didn't know exactly what it was, Mok Gyeong-un was increasingly fond of this chilling energy.

-Phew.

A pair of red eyes watched Mok Gyeong-un with interest, as if he was fascinating.

It was Cheong-ryeong, holding a long pipe in her mouth amidst the thick smoke.

Cheong-ryeong whispered softly to Demonic Monk beside her.

-Rebel monk. I think I know why you are swayed by that mortal.

That fellow was not an ordinary human being.

She, too, could instinctively sense it.